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Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Human resources management

Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

Investing in the United Nations for a stronger Organization worldwide: detailed report

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Accountability

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I. Introduction

1. In the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Investing in the United Nations: for a stronger Organization worldwide" (A/60/846), it was recalled that the General Assembly, in section I of its resolution 60/260, had requested proposals to specifically define accountability as well as clear accountability mechanisms, including to the Assembly, and to propose clear parameters for its application and the instruments for its rigorous enforcement, without exception, at all levels. It was also indicated that: (a) the Assembly had recently addressed the issue of accountability in its resolution 60/254, in which it took note of the report of the Secretary-General on measures to strengthen accountability at the United Nations (A/60/312); and (b) accountability arrangements would be discussed further in future reports, including those addressing human resources and the administration of justice. It was further pointed out that the overall strategy of strengthening capacity in the area of information and communication technology, exercising limited discretion in budget implementation, enhancing financial management arrangements and improving reporting mechanisms contributes to greater accountability through improved transparency in management systems.

2. Views have since been shared that it would be helpful if further attention were paid at this time to accountability issues, including a definition of accountability, so that related proposals regarding budget implementation, financial management and reporting mechanisms might be considered against the background of accountability concepts, frameworks and mechanisms. The present report has been prepared to facilitate such consideration in connection with the above-mentioned report, and in particular the addenda thereto (A/60/846/Add.1-4). It has been prepared in the full knowledge that, while there exist a multitude of accountability mechanisms and procedures, there is a widespread perception that those mechanisms and procedures have been of limited effectiveness to date. They require systematic and equitable enforcement if in future the accountability system is to become a useful driver of programme efficiency. The impact of many of the recently instituted accountability measures of 2005 and 2006 has yet to be felt, as such measures are implemented one step at a time. Further steps are to follow upon the completion of ongoing studies of governance and oversight, human resources and the administration of justice.

II. Definition

3. The call for a definition of accountability follows the use of the term by the General Assembly in several different ways, in a variety of contexts and under various agenda items in recent years. While the most recent report submitted by the Secretary-General on the subject (A/60/312) was issued under the agenda items on financial reports and audited financial statements and reports of the Board of Auditors, and review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, some of the earlier discussions have also taken place under the agenda items on human resources management and United Nations reform: measures and proposals.

4. These considerations of accountability date back more than 10 years and have resulted in the issuance of a number of reports that have shown that the term "accountability" has been applied to two distinct aspects of the same issue. It has been applied, on the one hand, to the broad responsibility of the Secretary-General

to Member States for the use of resources and the delivery of programmes and services (results) and, on the other hand, more narrowly, for the responsibility of individual staff members to the Secretary-General for performance of duties and ethical conduct. Any acceptable definition of the concept of accountability in the United Nations context would, therefore, need to take into account both the institutional and the personal aspects of accountability as currently understood in the Organization.

5. While the Assembly has requested a definition of accountability, it is understood that the request is for a working definition that may be applied in the context of arrangements existing under the United Nations Charter. Accordingly, definitions available from academic or legal sources and textbooks would require adaptation before they could be adopted for general use in the United Nations. In fact, the best definition of institutional accountability in the United Nations will reflect the concrete arrangements put in place, with the approval of Member States, for a framework to specify how the Secretary-General is held responsible for the use of resources and delivery of results. This is achieved by the operation of a set of transparent mechanisms that define the chain of responsibility and authority downward from the level of the Secretary-General to all individual staff members and specify the related reporting mechanisms upward from the lowest level of staff back to the Secretary-General and onward to the intergovernmental level (see annex I).

6. The definition of personal accountability will reflect the requirement for an individual staff member to explain and justify to his or her superior the performance of his or her defined duties and responsibilities and also to be answerable for his or her conduct, whether good or bad.

7. The General Assembly may therefore wish to consider adopting the following accountability definitions:

(a) *Institutional accountability*: the responsibility of the Secretary-General to explain and justify to the General Assembly and other relevant intergovernmental bodies, in a systematic framework and by an orderly process using transparent mechanisms, the performance of the Organization in using resources to achieve results mandated by the Member States in the Assembly and/or other intergovernmental bodies established under the Charter of the United Nations;

(b) *Personal accountability*: the duty of an individual staff member to exercise defined responsibilities appropriately, with a clear understanding of the consequences, and to explain and justify to the official who conferred the authority the results achieved and the manner in which the authority has been exercised.

III. Chain of responsibility, authority and accountability

8. As described in earlier reports on accountability, the chain of responsibility, authority and accountability flows institutionally from the intergovernmental organs to the Secretary-General and personally to managers and staff members. Under Article 97 of the Charter, the Secretary-General is the chief administrative officer of the Organization; the mandates promulgated by the principal organs are entrusted to him for their implementation under Article 98. The Secretary-General is therefore accountable to the Member States for the implementation of those mandates. The

Secretary-General's discretion as chief administrative officer is governed by Articles 100 and 101 of the Charter and by the staff, financial and programme planning regulations adopted by the General Assembly. His managerial discretion is exercised under the mandates given to him collectively by Member States and with the resources they make available to carry out those mandates. The responsibilities of Member States are also specified in many of those legislative mandates and, where specialized intergovernmental bodies are concerned, in their terms of reference.

9. A comprehensive system of accountability is based on the premises that responsibility must be clearly defined, managers and staff must have the resources, capacity and authority to carry out their respective responsibilities, and accountability must be established at all levels through appropriate mechanisms. Such an accountability system has existed within the Organization for many years and has been described, updated and discussed in a number of reports of the Secretary-General, the most recent being his report on measures to strengthen accountability at the United Nations (A/60/312). As is the case with most systems and the related measures and processes for implementation, full compliance and effectiveness require awareness, understanding, knowledge and timely application. An important element of the accountability system is the reporting requirement whereby Member States are kept informed of the management of the Organization's programmes and financial and human resources. Such transparent reporting allows Member States to provide policy direction, to review the status and effectiveness of implementation, to consider the continuing validity of mandates and to take decisions on future action to be taken by both Member States and the Secretary-General.

10. Recent enhancements to the accountability system within the Secretariat include, for example, the implementation of results-based management; the establishment of the Management Performance Board in 2005, the Ethics Office in 2006 and the Oversight Committee in 2005; enhancement of the Performance Appraisal System; protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct in 2006; the expanded and strengthened financial disclosure requirements in 2006; improved performance data; and expansion of training for all levels of staff. Beyond the Secretariat, the General Assembly, pursuant to its resolution 60/1, decided to establish the Independent Audit Advisory Committee to assist it in discharging its oversight responsibilities and, in its resolution 60/248, requested terms of reference and related resource requirements. This is a key strategic change which, once fully implemented, will greatly improve the quality of auditing as a core component of the Assembly's oversight of the Organization. Such measures and others already described in previous reports are intended to ensure that the legislative mandates are implemented in the most effective and efficient manner.

11. Elements of an effective accountability system, summarizing earlier reports and hereby updated, include:

(a) *A clearly defined institutional/governance framework.* Such a framework includes the Charter; legislative mandates (emanating from principal and subsidiary bodies); and staff, financial and programme planning regulations and rules, policies and procedures. In this connection, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/1, the question of governance and oversight is currently being addressed by an independent external evaluation, which will include measures to further strengthen the governance and oversight framework, particularly with regard to the operation

of results-based management and related programme monitoring and evaluation activities; the results of the evaluation will be transmitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly. Within the institutional/governance framework, the Secretary-General is institutionally accountable to Member States; all other staff members are personally accountable to the Secretary-General;

(b) *A clear definition of responsibility and authority and results to be achieved.* This includes a determination of which staff members are responsible for what, what they are meant to do and achieve and within what regulations and rules; and clear objectives, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement. In this connection, some of the recent measures effected in 2005 and 2006 include the following:

- (i) Establishment of executive decision-making committees (see annex II);
- (ii) A mandatory induction framework for senior managers;
- (iii) An improved senior management compact;
- (iv) An enhanced Performance Appraisal System;
- (v) Ethics training;
- (vi) Access to information concerning decisions of the Secretary-General in disciplinary matters;

(c) *Adequate resources and tools to implement mandates.* This element of the accountability system requires payment by Member States of assessments on time, in full and without conditions; effective management tools (plans, budgets, monitoring and evaluation); and effective human resources management;

(d) *Effective monitoring and oversight of programme, budgetary and staff performance.* The effective measurement of programme delivery and achievement of results requires:

- (i) Effective oversight mechanisms (Management Performance Board, Oversight Committee, Office of Internal Oversight Services, Board of Auditors, Joint Inspection Unit);
- (ii) Effective internal controls (control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information, communication and monitoring);
- (iii) Improvements in monitoring and self-evaluation, including updating and upgrading monitoring and evaluation tools;
- (iv) Enhanced accounting standards, as proposed in document A/60/846/Add.3, through the adoption of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards;
- (v) Enhanced Performance Appraisal System;
- (vi) Ensuring ethical conduct, financial disclosure and whistle-blower protection;

(e) *Effective follow-up and clear, meaningful consequences.* This element requires effective measures and sanctions for dealing with non-compliance and with poor performance, underperformance and non-performance. In this connection, the

administration of justice Redesign Panel will be submitting its recommendations to the General Assembly at the sixty-first session.

12. In implementing the accountability system, the Secretary-General expresses his accountability to Member States in reports submitted to them, as representatives of the principal organs of the United Nations or as representatives of the subsidiary intergovernmental bodies. Member States in turn exercise their oversight responsibility for programme performance and take decisions thereon. Programme managers are personally accountable to the Secretary-General, who exercises his responsibility for ensuring programme monitoring and improving staff performance.

IV. Accountability for results

13. The work of the Organization is conducted pursuant to legislative mandates adopted by the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies. For the regular budget, those legislative mandates are translated into programmes and subprogrammes, which are formulated in accordance with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8). The strategic framework serves as the basis for the formulation of the biennial programme budgets. The Secretary-General monitors the delivery of outputs and the achievement of expected accomplishments. The Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning also provide that all programmed activities shall be evaluated. With respect to peacekeeping operations, the development, review, approval and administration of their budgets follow similar results-based budgetary and implementation procedures.

14. The Secretary-General is thus institutionally accountable to Member States for the proper management of the Organization and the implementation of its mandated programmes and activities. The Secretary-General delegates authority to senior officials who are, in turn, personally accountable to him. There are reporting requirements throughout the cycle of planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of activities, and Member States have the opportunity to hold the Secretary-General accountable for actions taken to implement legislative mandates. Reporting requirements include status or progress reports on implementation, programme and budget performance reports, specific reports requested by intergovernmental bodies and evaluations of the work of the Organization to determine relevance, efficiency and effectiveness. In this connection, in addition to reporting requirements with respect to elements of the programme planning cycle, the Management Performance Board and the Oversight Committee, both of which were established in 2005, are expected to monitor the manner in which senior managers exercise all aspects of the authority that has been delegated to them with respect to programme management, including financial and human resources management, and to report thereon to the Secretary-General (see annex III).

15. Member States exercise their oversight responsibility by holding the Secretary-General accountable for the achievement of measurable results. This in turn requires a management culture that focuses on attaining clearly articulated objectives through the achievement of results. Good performance indicators are essential for measuring whether or not the expected results were achieved. These elements are

fundamental for results-based management, the full implementation of which will represent a significant step towards reaching the goal of accountability.

16. The challenges facing the Organization with respect to the effective management of programmes include the enhancement of results-based management, the strengthening of monitoring and evaluation activities and the improvement of internal controls. Training and certification of acquired skills and knowledge are key to ensuring more effective implementation of programmes.

17. It is noted that the programme evaluation system is separate and distinct from the personnel performance appraisal system. Since the programme evaluation system is concerned with programme effectiveness and impact rather than the performance of individual staff members, no information shall be transmitted between the two systems (Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, rule 107.3 (c)). At the same time, the Management Performance Board, in addition to assessing the functioning of individual departments and offices and the manner in which they discharge their responsibilities, will be holding senior managers accountable should problems arise.

V. Accountability for management of financial resources

18. As mentioned above, there is a system in place, including regulations and rules, for the planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation of the Organization's programmes and activities. Once the budgets are approved by the General Assembly, authorization to incur expenditures is issued under the authority of the Controller in the form of allotment advices, including staffing table authorizations. Various administrative instructions set out the procedures and norms governing the different items of expenditure. Extrabudgetary resources are subject to the same financial management systems as those provided under assessed budgets.

19. The Financial Rules establish a clear and hierarchical structure in the delegation of authority. The Secretary-General delegates authority and responsibility for the implementation of the Financial Regulations and Rules to the Under-Secretary-General for Management, who in turn formally and publicly delegates this authority to the Controller, except for the implementation of the Financial Regulations pertaining to procurement and property management, which are normally delegated to the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services. The Controller and the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services delegate some carefully defined aspects of their authority to the executive officers of departments and to heads of administration in offices away from Headquarters. Delegation of authority is done on a personal basis and not by virtue of the office held by the staff member. Financial or procurement authority can be further delegated by the executive officers or heads of administration, but the Controller and the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services remain ultimately accountable for its use. Delegation of authority is always done in writing and signed by those to whom the authority has been delegated. In this connection, it is recognized explicitly in the Financial Rules that accountability does not abrogate the responsibility of those delegating authority. Exercise of delegated authority requires the competency, knowledge and skills to ensure full compliance with the instruments for internal controls. In this connection, greater attention will need to be given in future to the timely issuance of guidelines, mandatory training and

certification of acquired knowledge and skills in order to strengthen accountability for financial management.

20. The internal financial control systems of the Organization are based on the concept of checks and balances, fundamental to which is the segregation of duties, so that transactions require approval and scrutiny by more than one individual. The internal control system entails the designation of staff with certifying or approving authority; other staff are responsible for signing cheques, operating bank accounts and effecting payments. The financial and staff regulations and rules contain explicit provisions to protect the Organization against any financial loss that might result from a staff member's violation of such rules. Financial rule 101.2 reads:

All United Nations staff are obligated to comply with the Financial Regulations and Rules and with administrative instructions issued in connection with those Regulations and Rules. Any staff member who contravenes the Financial Regulations and Rules or corresponding administrative instructions may be held personally accountable and financially liable for his or her actions.

In this connection, an administrative instruction was issued (ST/AI/2004/3) for the purpose of implementing the provisions of financial rule 101.2 and staff rules 112.3, 212.2 and 312.2, detailing the conditions under which staff members may be required to reimburse the United Nations either partially or in full for any financial loss suffered by the United Nations as a result of the staff member's gross negligence or of his or her having violated any regulation, rule or administrative instruction.

21. During any financial period the Secretary-General's accountability to Member States for the management of financial resources is reflected in the ongoing reports Member States receive on financial and budgetary issues, including reports on the financial situation, financial statements, audits, resource requirements, budget performance, statements of programme budget implications and other reports as requested by Member States, to facilitate their decision-making on the utilization and prudent stewardship of the funds of the Organization. Financial and programme adjustments are reported to Member States for approval.

22. Member States, through examination by the Office of Internal Oversight Services of compliance with policies, also hold the Secretary-General accountable for the safeguarding of assets, the economical and efficient use of resources and the effectiveness of programme performance. Similarly, Member States, through the work of the United Nations Board of Auditors, hold the Secretary-General accountable for the quality and accuracy of the accounts of the United Nations.

VI. Accountability for management of human resources

23. Under the Charter, the Secretary-General is the chief administrative officer of the Organization (Article 97). He has the authority to appoint staff under regulations established by the General Assembly (Article 101, para. 1). In the appointment of staff and the determination of the conditions of service, the paramount consideration is the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, with due regard paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible (*ibid.*, para. 3).

24. The authority to select staff under the Staff Regulations and Rules is delegated to heads of departments and offices, who are accountable to the Secretary-General for the manner in which they exercise that authority. Under the staff selection system, which applies to staff appointed under the 100 series of the Staff Rules, the authority is exercised under the scrutiny of a central review body, which will ensure that the process leading to the decision was properly followed.

25. The authority to administer staff under the Staff Regulations and Rules is delegated to senior officials who are personally accountable to the Secretary-General for the manner in which they exercise that authority. Those senior officials may further delegate the exercise of elements of their own authority to other officials, who will be answerable to them for the manner in which they performed their functions.

26. Staff regulation 1.3 provides that staff members are accountable to the Secretary-General for the proper discharge of their functions. Staff members are required to uphold the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity in the discharge of their functions, and their performance is appraised periodically to ensure that the required standards of performance are met.

27. Department heads submit to the Secretary-General a senior management compact, which includes, in addition to programmatic and financial objectives, specific human resources objectives and targets agreed upon by the department head and the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management. The Office of Human Resources Management is responsible for monitoring progress made towards achievement of those objectives and targets. The Management Performance Board is responsible for monitoring the manner in which senior managers exercise all aspects of the authority that has been delegated to them, including their performance in achieving the objectives contained in human resources action plans.

28. All other staff, up to and including those at the Assistant Secretary-General level,¹ are covered by the performance appraisal system (PAS). A key feature of PAS is a clear definition at the beginning of the performance year by the staff member and his or her supervisor of work objectives and associated performance indicators. PAS has a midterm review and a year-end appraisal, at which point performance is evaluated using the performance indicators defined at the beginning of the year. Another key feature of PAS is that it assesses how staff demonstrate the Organization's core values and competencies. All managers are evaluated against the requisite managerial competencies.

29. Another important dimension of accountability is that all staff members, regardless of level, are held to the basic obligations of proper conduct defined in article 1 of the Staff Regulations and chapter 1 of the Staff Rules and are subject to disciplinary measures when misconduct is established.

30. With respect to the accountability of the Secretary-General to Member States for the management of human resources in the context of policies determined by the General Assembly, reports on human resources management are submitted to the Assembly on a regular basis for consideration, overall direction and decision-making. As requested by the Assembly in its resolution 60/260, further details on the accountability mechanisms in respect of the Secretary-General's reform proposals

¹ The governance and oversight evaluation is recommending that this be extended to the Under-Secretaries-General.

relating to human resources management will be submitted to the Assembly at its sixty-first session in the context of a detailed report to be provided in respect of the human resources aspects of the report of the Secretary-General on investing in the United Nations: for a stronger Organization worldwide (A/60/692 and Corr.1).

VII. Accountability for management of procurement

31. The Secretary-General, in his report on procurement reform (A/60/846/Add.5), has described concrete measures for implementing procurement reform focusing on strengthening internal control measures, optimizing United Nations acquisition and procurement management so as to reduce acquisition costs and strategic management of United Nations procurement. These measures are aimed at enhancing responsibility and accountability by promoting ethics and integrity in the workplace (whistle-blower protection policy, training in ethics, Supplier Code of Conduct, independent Bid Protest System), strengthening training programmes, updating and/or modifying procurement processes (updated procurement manual, improved terms and conditions for tenders, vendor roster, ex post facto cases) and enhancing governance (risk management, contract compliance, oversight).

32. Delegation of authority, which does not abrogate the responsibility of the official delegating the authority, for procurement activities needs to be closely monitored. In this respect, authority is delegated formally to staff responsible for procurement. The Secretariat will terminate such authority should serious flaws in its exercise be discovered. At the same time, disciplinary measures are taken wherever and whenever necessary based on established procedures currently in place.

33. It should be noted that accountability for procurement activities does not rest solely with procurement officers but also with requisitioners, who also need to be fully trained and made aware of proper procurement practices. It is the responsibility of requisitioners to have proper procurement plans so that actions for the acquisition of goods and services can be taken on a timely basis and programme results can be achieved in a cost-effective manner. The Secretariat has been monitoring actions taken by requisitioners and continues to draw to their attention instances where procurement procedures are not adhered to. For any serious breach of conduct, disciplinary measures are taken, as appropriate.

34. The Secretariat continues to bring procurement staff at Headquarters and in the field up to date on the concerns expressed by Members and by the auditors. In addition to sharing knowledge and experience, there is a need to enhance training in procurement-related activities throughout the Secretariat, which the Secretariat plans to do. It is necessary to ensure that staff assigned to procurement activities have the requisite knowledge and skills prior to assuming those responsibilities. In this respect, the Secretariat ensures that new staff being recruited for procurement functions have appropriate procurement experience and the necessary educational background, preferably with certification in procurement. The Secretariat plans to increase such procurement certification opportunities for current staff members as well. Procurement staff assigned to field missions are technically cleared by the Procurement Service prior to assignment.

35. One of the prerequisites for carrying out procurement activities in offices away from Headquarters and in peacekeeping operations, outside the Procurement

Service, is the establishment of an adequate local capacity consisting of trained and experienced officers. Once such capacity is fully established, procurement authority may safely be delegated to offices and missions. Currently, the instrument of delegation gives blanket authority to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, which is then further delegated to individual procurement officers in the field. This procedure is under review to determine whether a more focused arrangement would be preferable in future to provide for sounder internal controls on procurement.

VIII. Conclusions and recommendations

36. Starting with the Charter, which sets out the purposes and principles of the United Nations, there are many instruments that guide the work of the Organization—legislative mandates, regulations and rules, policies and procedures, administrative issuances, guidelines, instructions, oversight and review bodies, and performance standards. In addition, there are reporting requirements of Member States to address issues related to the management of programmes, procurement and financial and human resources. While such instruments provide legitimacy for the conduct of business, they also impose limitations on the way the Secretariat performs its duties. With the increase in field operations, as well as their complexity, there is an urgent need to find better ways to balance the timely implementation of Security Council and General Assembly mandates and the fulfilment of all procedural requirements. It is important to have effective controls, and it is equally important to encourage greater initiative and innovation in order to manage better and in a more timely manner. An appropriate balance between the overall policy guidance from Member States and the exercise of managerial discretion by the Secretary-General is essential for meeting today's multifaceted and complex challenges in a timely and effective manner.

37. The assumption of responsibility, and being held accountable for the performance of functions and duties, require an awareness, understanding and knowledge of the nature and scope of the regulatory framework. It is essential that staff are well equipped to ensure compliance within that framework. To that end the Secretariat will not only enhance, and enforce where applicable, training programmes, but will also require in future certification of knowledge and skills acquired for the performance of functions in the areas of finance, procurement and human resources management.

38. Accountability should be viewed not only from the perspective of possible malfeasance, but also from the perspective of competencies for programme performance. Little attention has been given, within the Secretariat or by intergovernmental bodies, to holding the Secretariat accountable for the achievement of results. In reviewing programmes of work, the focus has been too much on the pre-implementation stage and, unless there are glaring errors, fraud or corruption, which inevitably draw attention, little time is given to determining whether or not results were achieved and, if not, why not. Measures exist to deal with inappropriate behaviour, negligence, and gross negligence, and they need little enhancement. Measures to determine the adequacy of results achieved, the soundness of management of results, financial and human resources, and procurement and subsequent action to hold staff accountable are probably insufficient, however.

39. The General Assembly has repeatedly stressed the importance of strengthened accountability and of ensuring greater accountability of the Secretary-General to Member States for the efficient and effective implementation of legislative mandates. Measures that have been put in place to ensure accountability for the management of programmes and of financial and human resources have been described in a number of reports over the past 10 years or so, the most recent being the report of the Secretary-General on measures to strengthen accountability at the United Nations (A/60/312). Follow-up action in implementing those measures has, however, not been comprehensive. There is currently limited understanding of the consequences of underperformance, poor performance, or non-performance. There are currently no sanctions for the non-achievement of expected results. The oversight of performance within the Secretariat rests on the shoulders of staff who are appointed to sit on boards, panels and committees to undertake such reviews in addition to their regular functions. It is not surprising that such oversight functions are given lower priority when more urgent situations arise requiring immediate attention.

40. A transparent and effective system of accountability and responsibility demands more than setting out or revising procedures, regulations and rules. An important element in the system is the continued promotion of a management culture that encourages improved performance, higher levels of productivity and better quality of work. Ethical behaviour and compliance with the standards of conduct in the international civil service are required, as is an ongoing flow of information within and among departments so that officials are fully aware, on a continuing basis, of their respective responsibilities, particularly since coordination and collaboration are essential for the implementation of many mandates.

41. As indicated above, details on accountability for human resources management and in relation to results-based management will be addressed in the reports on reform of human resources management and on governance and oversight respectively, to be submitted to the General Assembly later this year.

42. **The General Assembly may wish to:**

(a) **Welcome the present report and endorse the definitions of accountability provided in paragraph 7 above;**

(b) **Note that a sound legal framework for accountability exists in the United Nations, consisting of, inter alia:**

(i) **The Charter;**

(ii) **The Financial Regulations and Rules;**

(iii) **The Staff Regulations and Rules;**

(iv) **The Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation;**

(v) **The rules of procedure of the General Assembly, which specify the duties of the Secretary-General and of the Secretariat;**

(vi) **Procedures set out in regulations and rules, as well as in a substantial number of General Assembly resolutions, which govern reporting by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the use of financial and**

human resources and on results-based programme implementation, including monitoring and evaluation;

(vii) Procedures governing the reporting to the General Assembly by oversight bodies, including the Board of Auditors and the Office of Internal Oversight Services;

(c) Note that the accountability framework of the United Nations has been strengthened in 2005 and 2006 through:

(i) The establishment of the Ethics Office and the provision of systematic mandatory ethics training for staff;

(ii) Protection against harassment and retaliation for reporting misconduct;

(iii) Strengthened financial disclosure requirements;

(iv) The establishment of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee;

(v) The establishment of the Management Performance Board to hold senior officials accountable for the conduct of their functions;

(vi) The establishment of the Oversight Committee to strengthen compliance with approved audit and oversight recommendations;

(vii) The establishment of executive decision-making committees;

(d) Note that further enhancements to the United Nations accountability system may be anticipated in the light of recommendations expected from the ongoing review of United Nations governance and oversight and of the internal justice system;

(e) Request the Secretary-General to continue strengthening the effectiveness of the accountability system through:

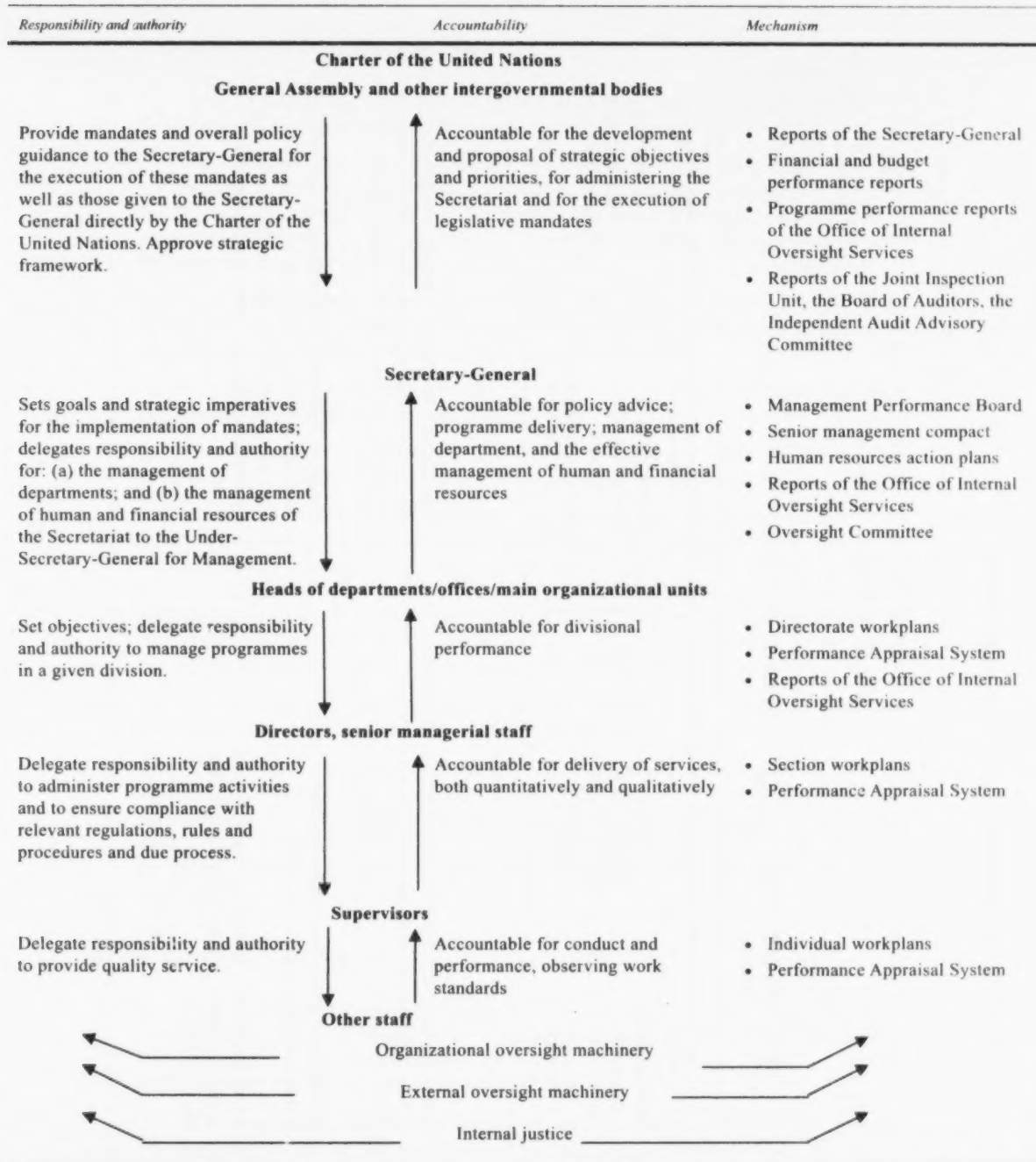
(i) Improvements in results-based budgeting and management;

(ii) Ensuring that sanctions in the accountability system are applied through rigorous enforcement without exception at all levels;

(iii) Ensuring that adequate incentives are in place to reward good performance.

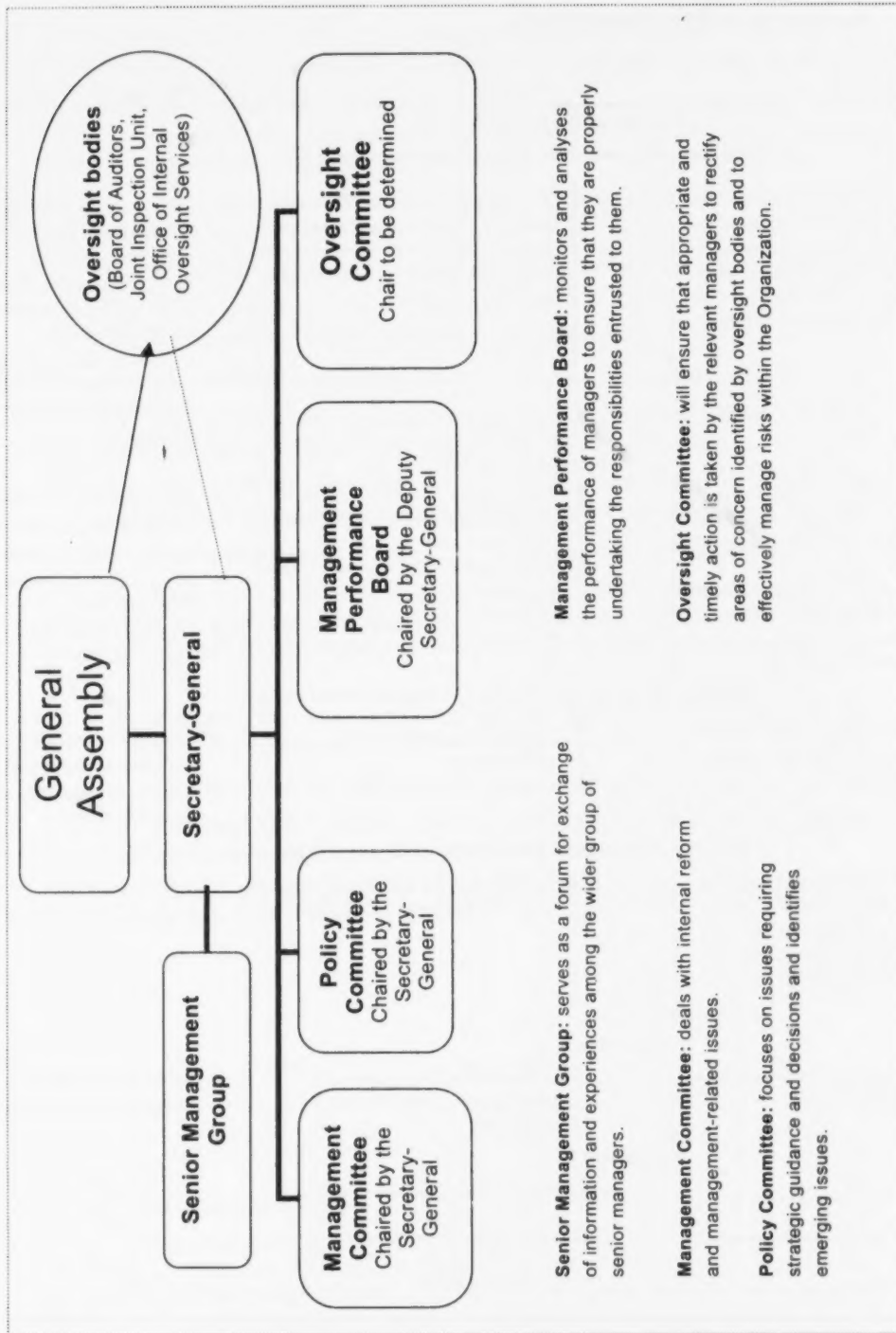
Annex I

Accountability framework



Annex II

Executive decision-making committees



Annex III

Functions of the Management Performance Board and of the Oversight Committee

A. Management Performance Board

1. The Management Performance Board shall assume an advisory role to the Secretary-General and shall perform the following functions:

(a) Review the findings and recommendations of the high-level follow-up mechanism to be established in accordance with General Assembly resolution 59/272 of 23 December 2004; and ensure that the Secretariat addresses the serious managerial issues identified by its oversight bodies and acts upon the recommendations of these bodies in a timely manner;

(b) Monitor the manner in which senior managers exercise all aspects of the authority that has been delegated to them, including their performance in achieving the objectives contained in human resources action plans;

(c) Review the outcome of the administration of justice proceedings in the Secretariat for management accountability purposes.

2. The Management Performance Board shall also put into place a system of peer review to ensure adherence to acceptable standards of managerial conduct.

3. In order to discharge its functions, the Management Performance Board may assess the functioning of individual departments and offices and the manner in which senior managers in those departments and offices discharge their responsibilities. Where problems are identified, the Management Performance Board shall consider the management policy implications and hold senior managers accountable by recommending appropriate corrective action to the senior managers, reviewing the action taken and deciding on any further measures necessary.

4. The Management Performance Board may request at any time the information it finds necessary for the discharge of its functions.

5. Based on its findings, the Management Performance Board may recommend appropriate remedies. Recommendations shall be communicated to the Secretary-General and the concerned programme manager. The Management Performance Board shall monitor implementation of any decision taken by the Secretary-General, or agreement made between the Secretary-General and the concerned programme manager.

B. Oversight Committee

6. The Oversight Committee shall provide independent advice to the Secretary-General on all Secretariat activities relating to internal and external oversight and investigations, including internal controls and monitoring of corrective actions recommended by internal and external auditors.

7. The Oversight Committee shall advise the Secretary-General on the response of management to the recommendations made by oversight bodies and on the manner in which the implementation of those recommendations can have the

greatest impact. The Oversight Committee shall act in pursuance of the following objectives:

(a) To ensure systematic implementation of recommendations that have been approved by the General Assembly or accepted by the Secretariat;

(b) To share audit-related information and lessons learned within the Secretariat where appropriate;

(c) To ensure that significant risks to the Organization are identified and mitigating measures taken.

8. The Oversight Committee has the following responsibilities:

(a) To ensure that appropriate and timely action is taken by the relevant managers to rectify areas of concern identified by oversight bodies and to effectively manage risks within the Organization;

(b) To alert the Secretary-General on systemic organizational issues that may arise from audit, investigation or evaluation reports and make recommendations as appropriate;

(c) To provide advice and suggestions on the priorities, long-term strategy and annual audit workplans of oversight bodies and request that any significant risks identified be included in such workplans;

(d) To prepare the response of the Secretary-General to reports of oversight bodies submitted to the General Assembly, taking into account the input provided by the departments or offices concerned;

(e) To render advice on audit-related matters to the Secretary-General and department heads as it deems appropriate;

(f) To encourage and facilitate, if necessary, collaboration and cooperation among the various oversight bodies.

9. The Oversight Committee shall meet at the request of the Chairperson or any member as required, but not less than once every calendar quarter.

10. The Oversight Committee shall submit to the Secretary-General an annual report on its work for the previous year during the first quarter of each calendar year. The Committee shall also transmit to the Secretary-General and to the Chairperson of the Management Performance Board a copy of the minutes of its meetings.

11. The Oversight Committee shall contribute to the preparation of the annual report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, explaining the measures taken to strengthen accountability in the Secretariat and the results achieved.

